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ABSTRACT

Described is a program in which two special education teachers from the Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program served as helping teachers with mildly handicapped kindergarten and first grade children in regular classes. It is explained that the goals of these helping teachers were to identify children with learning and/or behavior problems and to provide direct services to them and to their teachers. Noted are the types of assessments made, and touched upon are other activities, including coordinating services for students and disseminating a monthly newsletter. More than half of the document is devoted to nine appendixes, including sample referral and lesson plan forms. (CL)

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The Austin Early Childhood Special Education Program

HELPING TEACHER PROGRAM

Outreach Project
Austin Early Childhood Special Education
Austin Independent School District

Fall, 1976

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Overview of Program

The children referred to the Austin Early Childhood Special Education (AECSE) Program are moderately to severely handicapped. However, there is a large population of children in Austin Independent School District (AISD) kindergarten classrooms who also require special education services from trained teachers but need an instructional arrangement that will keep them in the kindergarten setting in their home schools. These kindergarten children need to be identified and served before they begin experiencing difficulties and failure in the first and second grades. In an effort to meet the needs of these minimally handicapped children, AECSE initiated the helping teacher program.

Two AECSE teachers trained in special education and early childhood education served as helping teachers on a two-year pilot basis, 1974-1976. Their primary function was to identify and provide direct services for children in AISD kindergartens who were having problems severe enough to interfere with effective functioning in the classroom. Although services were provided primarily for kindergarten children, some first grade and special education children were also served.

Goals and Objectives

The goals for the helping teacher are as follows:

1. To identify children in AISD kindergartens who have learning and/or behavior problems and to provide direct services to these children;
2. To provide direct services to kindergarten teachers of the identified children;
3. To provide follow-up services for identified children;
4. To attend Local Support Team (LST) meetings and coordinate efforts to provide special services to identified children;
5. To keep records on services provided;
6. To compile and distribute a monthly newsletter.

Identifying and Providing Direct Services to Kindergarten Children

The identification and delivery of services process follows the AECSE model of referral, screening, program definition, program implementation, and program evaluation.

Kindergarten teachers are given several copies of a Referral to Helping Teacher form (see Appendix) at the beginning of the year. A form is filled out by a teacher when she refers a child to the helping teacher. The classroom teacher specifies the child's presenting problem, appropriate times to schedule sessions, and any additional services the child is receiving. When the helping teacher receives a completed referral form from the teacher, she schedules a time for classroom observation of the child. This begins the screening phase.

The helping teacher employs two types of assessment in screening a child. The first is informal and takes place during the classroom observation period mentioned previously. The helping teacher observes the child in his kindergarten classroom and records her observations on an Observation/Initial Assessment form (see Appendix). This informal assessment gives the helping teacher an opportunity to see the child in his familiar environment, where his usual behaviors occur. The helping teacher can then draw conclusions about the

child's social and affective behaviors as they relate to his general level of functioning.

The second type of assessment used in the screening process is formal, and takes place in an individual setting when the helping teacher administers the Helping Teacher Checklist (see Appendix) to a child. The checklist assesses the child's competence on a variety of language/cognitive and perceptual/psychomotor tasks. The checklist section on social/affective development is completed by the classroom teacher.

After completing formal and informal assessment on a child, the helping teacher meets with the classroom teacher to share the results. At this time the helping teacher determines whether to schedule the child for direct services or to implement an indirect intervention program through the classroom teacher. If the child is to be scheduled for direct services, the helping teacher initiates the program definition phase of service delivery.

A child's program is determined primarily by his performance on the checklist and the observations made by the helping teacher. Information is also supplied by the classroom teacher. The helping teacher completes an Educational Plan (see Appendix) in which she describes the child's strengths and weaknesses, best learning modalities, and appropriate remediations areas. She also lists goals for the child and notes areas of remediation pertaining to the goals.

This plan is kept up-to-date during delivery of services, and goals are revised according to the child's performance.

Program implementation occurs when direct services begin. The instructional arrangement is determined by a child's needs; most children require services on an individual basis, though small groups of two to four or larger groups of five or more may be arranged if appropriate. The number of sessions per week and length of each session are dependent on a child's needs and the helping teacher's schedule.

The helping teacher records plans for each session with a child on a Lesson Plan form (see Appendix). She lists activities for the session plus materials needed to carry out the activities, and records the child's performance at the end of the session.

A child may be served in one of several settings, depending on facilities at each school. In some schools, the helping teacher works with a child in one corner of the classroom. Other schools may provide the helping teacher with a separate room for working with children.

The program designed for a child depends on the child's strengths and weaknesses as identified in the assessment process. The program may include remedial activities in several areas: language, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, or perceptual. Materials used in program

implementation are provided through the AECSE Program, although the helping teacher may use personal resources. If a child needs help in controlling his behavior or adjusting socially in the classroom, the helping teacher may schedule time in the classroom to model behavior management techniques for the teacher, to set up behavior management precedures for the teacher to use with the child, or to work with the child outside the classroom on controlling his behavior.

Three types of program evaluation take place. The first is session evaluation, where the child's performance on specific activities is recorded on the Lesson Plan form each time he is seen by the helping teacher. The second evaluation occurs in December, when the helping teacher writes a mid-year report summarizing the child's progress to date. The evaluation is recorded on the Mid-Year Report form (see Appendix). The third evaluation, a Final Helping Teacher Report (see Appendix), is written in May and provides a detailed description of the child's strengths and weaknesses, opcimal educational setting for various types of activities, successful behavior management techniques, and makes recommendations in specific areas. Based on the Final Helping Teacher Report the helping teacher makes a recommendation for the following year's placement. This recommendation suggests placement in a regular first grade classroom or a specific special education program. The Local

Support Team endorses or amends the helping teacher's recommendations.

Another type of evaluation centers around the helping teacher program itself. At the end of the year, classroom teachers complete a Helping Teacher Evaluation form (see Appendix) in which they define strengths and weaknesses of the program and make suggestions for improvement. The evaluations are used as a basis for modifying the helping teacher program for the following year.

Direct Services to Teachers of Identified Children

The helping teacher maintains direct contact with classroom teachers of identified children in an effort to ensure continuity of services to children and provide support to the teachers. Classroom teachers are included in the screening and program definition phases, and have access to the helping teacher's written records on a child. Contact with a teacher is maintained through frequent sharing of lesson plans and progress reports, formal meetings, and informal conversations. The helping teacher may provide materials for the teacher to use with a child in the classroom in carrying out the prescribed program. By maintaining frequent contact with the classroom teacher, the helping teacher facilitates a carry-over of services from individual sessions to the classroom.

Follow-Up Services

The helping teacher provides follow-up services for those children served by the helping teacher the previous year. The primary purpose of this service is to facilitate a child's transition from one class to another by promoting continuity of services. Follow-up services include sharing information on a child with the receiving teacher, coordinating contact of past and receiving teachers, providing resource help for a child should the need arise, providing the receiving teacher with pertinent work and/or information from the helping teacher, and maintaining periodic contact with the receiving teacher to facilitate the child's transition.

Attending Meetings and Coordinating Services

A kindergarten child whose problems are severe enough to warrant additional special services is referred by the classroom teacher to the Local Support Team (LST). The LST is composed of the school principal, counselor, visiting teacher, classroom teacher, school nurse, school psychometrist, supervisor, and other persons involved with a specific child. The LST makes decisions regarding psychological testing, help from outside agencies, classroom placement, and other matters concerning a child's program. If a child referred to the LST is receiving services from the helping teacher, the helping teacher attends the meeting and participates in decision making.

The helping teacher may also inform the LST about a child who is currently receiving services and may need continued services the following year. Early identification of a child who needs services can avoid delay in providing the needed services and facilitate continuity of services between kindergarten and first grade.

Occasionally the helping teacher may coordinate efforts to provide special services for a child. Activities in this area include initiating contact between special education teachers and classroom teachers in the school, initiating referrals to private therapy centers such as the Capital Area Rehabilitation Center, and contacting representatives of special programs designed to help teachers, such as Managing Classrooms Positively.

Record Keeping

The helping teachers developed a system of record keeping to ensure accurate documentation of services to a child. This system is based on a series of forms designed to document a child's program through the five phases of service delivery. The forms are presented in the Appendix and include a Referral to Helping Teacher form, Observation/Initial Assessment form, Checklist, Educational Plan, Lesson Plan form, Mid-year report, and Final Helping Teacher Report.

Notebooks are kept for each school served, and records in the notebooks document services to children in that school. The note-

books are made available to school personnel, and principals, teachers, and supervisors are given copies of written reports on a child's progress.

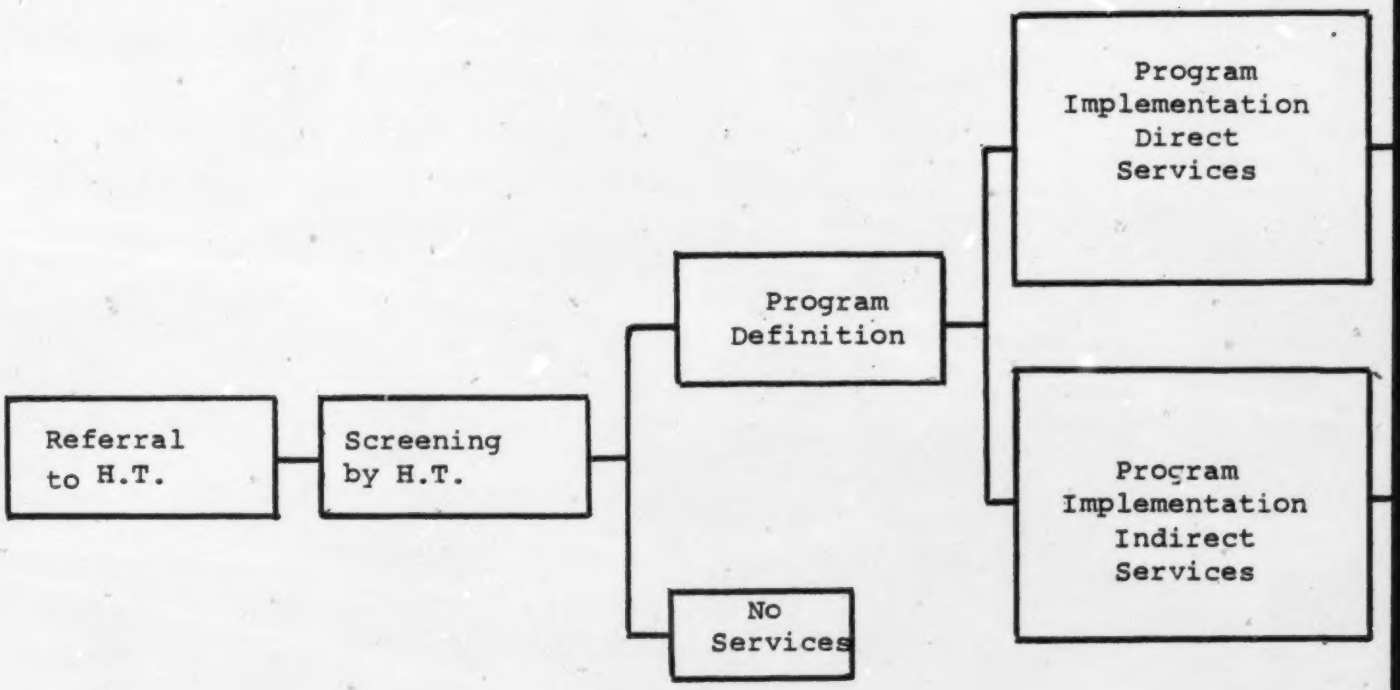
Monthly Newsletter

In an effort to share ideas among classrooms and promote innovative teaching in the classrooms, the helping teachers initiated a monthly "Good Ideas" newsletter. The newsletter contains suggestions for activities in various curriculum areas, ideas for classroom arrangement or scheduling, and directions for teacher-made materials. Ideas for the newsletter are gathered from magazines, AECSE and kindergarten classrooms, professional conferences, and the personal repertoire of the helping teachers. The helping teachers collect the ideas and compile them in a newsletter with each item numbered, specific skill areas relating to the idea listed, and the activity described in detail. The newsletters are distributed to AECSE teachers, kindergarten and special education teachers in the schools being served, and other persons requesting a copy.

Appendix

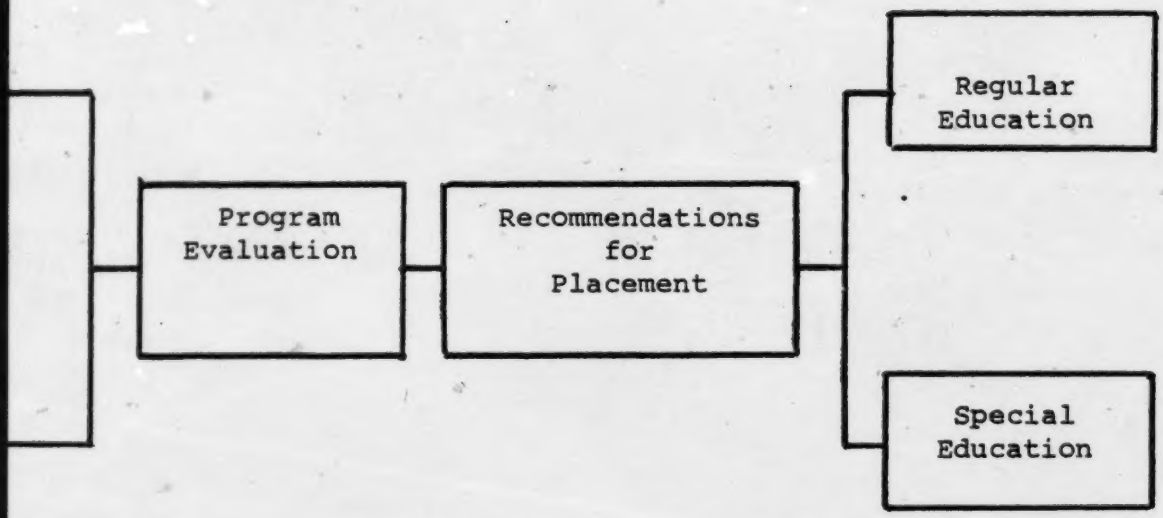
HELPING TEACHER SERVICES

F L O W



TO KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

C H A R T



Referral to Helping Teacher

School _____

Teacher _____

Child's name _____

Date _____

Reason (s) for referral: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Suggested time to work with child (e.g. free play, groups, etc.)

_____

_____

Other help child is receiving (speech, etc.) in or out of school

_____

_____

_____

_____

Observation/Initial Assessment

Child's name _____

Date _____

Observations/Assessment and Comments:

Recommendations:

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

HELPING TEACHER CHECKLIST

Child's Name _____

School _____

Helping Teacher _____

Pre-test Date _____

Post-test Date _____

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

HELPING TEACHER CHECKLIST

Pre	Post		
____	____	1.	Identifies and names colors. red purple white blue orange pink yellow brown green black
____	____	2.	Identifies and names shapes. circle rectangle triangle diamond square oval
____	____	3.	Reproduces a variety of patterns using pegs, cube blocks, parquetry blocks, and beads (off card)
____	____	4.	Seriates objects by size.
____	____	5.	Sequences and reads picture stories (3-5 pictures).
____	____	6.	Demonstrates visual memory.
____	____	7.	Demonstrates understanding of spatial prepositions. A. Identifies position of object B. Puts self or object in correct position over on bottom through under in in front between out in back (behind) on top around beside
____	____	8.	Follows left to right progression.
____	____	9.	Demonstrates understanding of same and different.
____	____	10.	Visually discriminates differences in directionality of objects and letters.
____	____	11.	Classifies objects into appropriate categories (i.e. food, clothing, animals).

Pre	Post		
____	____	12.	Discriminates opposite relationships of size, length, weight, thermal, textures, and prepositional opposites. big/little hot/cold in/out long/short rough/smooth up/down light/heavy open/shut on/off
____	____	13.	Attention span is adequate for instructional activities.
____	____	14.	Listens and follows verbal directions. Indicate number of directions correctly followed in sequence.
____	____	15.	Reproduces sequences heard auditorily (clapping patterns, random digits and words, sentences).
____	____	16.	States functions of simple objects.
____	____	17.	Answers comprehension questions requiring logical conclusions.
____	____	18.	Can answer "Wh-" questions.
____	____	19.	Draw an easily recognizable picture of a person, with major body parts in place.
____	____	20.	Rote counts to 10.
____	____	21.	Identifies numerals 1-10.
____	____	22.	Demonstrates one-to-one correspondence.
____	____	23.	Can make sets of objects 1-10.
____	____	24.	Counts sets of objects with one-to-one correspondence and correct number sequence.
____	____	25.	Compares differences in dimensions (taller, shorter, longer, thinner, wider).
____	____	26.	Runs in well-coordinated manner
____	____	27.	Balances on one foot for approximately 10 seconds. Check each foot, with eyes open and closed.

Pre	Post		
____	____	28.	Skips on alternating feet.
____	____	29.	Turns a somersault.
____	____	30.	Alternates feet going upstairs.
____	____	31.	Alternates feet going downstairs.
____	____	32.	Catches and throws a small ball. (6 inches or less)
____	____	33.	Kicks a small ball.
____	____	34.	Jumps with two feet together.
____	____	35.	Hops on one foot. (Check each foot)
____	____	36.	Cuts with scissors along lines with accuracy.
____	____	37.	Manipulates fasteners on clothing and shoes.
____	____	38.	Works puzzles. (indicate number of pieces)
____	____	39.	Holds and manipulates pencils, crayons, and brushes of various sizes.
____	____	40.	Recognizes first name printed.
____	____	41.	Prints first name.
____	____	42.	Writes numerals 1-10.
____	____	43.	Copies or draws recognizable shapes (+, X, O, □, △, ▭).
____	____	44.	Attends school regularly.
____	____	45.	Takes care of his personal belongings.
____	____	46.	Cooperates in classroom routines.
____	____	47.	Makes transitions from one activity to another easily.
____	____	48.	Completes self-initiated projects; completes teacher-initiated projects.

Pre	Post		
____	____	49.	Replaces materials after use.
____	____	50.	Takes turns and shares.
____	____	51.	Works and plays with minimal teacher supervision.
____	____	52.	Respects others' rights and property
____	____	53.	Plays cooperatively with other children.
____	____	54.	Works cooperatively with adults.
____	____	55.	Works cooperatively with a small group.
____	____	56.	Works cooperatively, waits turn and listens in large group.
____	____	57.	Carries out responsibilities in classroom.
____	____	58.	Demonstrates self-control. Does not engage in excessive showing-off.
____	____	59.	Exerts a reasonable amount of effort and does not give up easily.
____	____	60.	Demonstrates aggressive behavior directed toward peers or teachers.
		61.	General evaluation of child's classroom behavior:

Helping Teacher Educational Plan

Child _____ Date _____

School _____ Classroom Teacher _____

Helping Teacher _____

1. Description of Child
   A. Presenting Problem

   B. Physical Appearance and Outstanding Characteristics

   C. Typical Classroom Behavior

2. Relative Strengths

3. Relative Weaknesses

4. Best Learning Modalities

Input	Output
____ Auditory	____ Oral
____ Visual	____ Written
____ Tactual	____ Non-verbal
____ No difference	____ No difference

5. Remediation
   - ____ Auditory discrimination
   - ____ Auditory memory
   - ____ Visual discrimination
   - ____ Visual memory
   - ____ abstract reasoning
   - ____ gross motor
   - ____ fine motor
   - ____ perceptual motor
   - ____ concepts (specify)
   - ____ other (specify)

DATE	GOALS/EVALUATION	AREAS

Lesson Plan Form

Child (ren)'s name _____

Date _____

School _____

Concept or Activity	Materials or Equipment Needed

Comments and Evaluation:

Mid-Year Report

Child's Name _____ School _____

Date of Report _____ Grade _____

Schedule _____ Classroom Teacher _____

Helping Teacher _____

I. Initial Assessment
   A. Strengths

   B. Deficits

II. Remediation Program (see next page for details)
   A. Behavioral

   B. Academic

   C. Motor

III. Summary of Progress (see next page for details)
   A. Behavioral

   B. Academic

   C. Motor

IV. Recommendations
   A. Continued remediation and observation

   B. Testing

   C. Other

II. Remediation Program

A. Behavioral

B. Academic

C. Motor

III. Summary of Progress

A. Behavioral

B. Academic

C. Motor

Final Helping Teacher Report
School Year _____ to _____

Child's Name _____ Date of report _____

Grade and Teacher _____ School _____

Helping Teacher _____

1. Physical and Social/Behavioral description of the child and his facility with oral language.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Relative strengths of the child related to affect, skill development, motor, social/behavioral and oral language.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Relative weaknesses of the child for above areas.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Indicate the optimum educational setting for the following activities.

Setting \ Activities	Language	Visual Perceptual	Gross Motor	Fine Motor	Academic
Large group (8 children or more)					
Small group (7 children or less)					
Can work independently					
Only one-to-one with adult					

5. Attention span (approximate minutes) of sustained on-task behavior in:

   a. Large group (8 children or more) _____

   b. Small group (7 children or less) _____

   c. Independent classroom work _____

   d. Unstructured teacher chosen activity _____

   e. Self-chosen activity _____

   f. Individual work with the teacher _____

6. Successful Behavior Management Program

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Special considerations for the child's optimum functioning in the classroom including the child's best method of information assimilation and the child's best method of response.

8. Summary of child's progress in the past year.

9. Recommendations

A. Behavioral/ Social

B. Academic

C. Motor

Helping Teacher Evaluation

The Helping Teacher program is completing its second year, and your input is vital in evaluating the success of the program. You are not required to sign your name, nor are you obligated to evaluate your Helping Teacher on a personal basis. We are interested in how you see the program as a service, and how we can improve it to provide maximum benefit for you. Please be frank, and elaborate as much as possible.

1. In what ways was the Helping Teacher beneficial to you?

2. What services did the Helping Teacher provide that may not have been accomplished otherwise?

3. What services would have been helpful for you and were not provided?

4. Did the Helping Teacher keep you informed about each child's program? If so, how did this help you?

   Did you observe the Helping Teacher with the child? If so, in what way was this helpful for you?

   Did you have access to the written records which were kept on each child? If so, what way was this helpful for you?

5. What changes or improvements would you like to see in the Helping Teacher program?

Additional Comments:

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